

HOUSE BILL 457
By Ritchie

AN ACT to designate the bridge that spans the Tennessee River on Interstate 140 (Pellissippi Parkway) between Knox and Blount counties as the "Lt. Alexander 'Sandy' Bonnyman Memorial Bridge."

WHEREAS, from time to time, this General Assembly has seen fit to name certain public highways and bridges to honor those courageous men and women of the United States Armed Forces who, in life and death, exemplified the highest precepts of volunteerism, citizenship and selfless devotion to liberty for all American citizens; and

WHEREAS, the late Lieutenant Alexander "Sandy" Bonnyman, United States Marine Corps, is most assuredly one such valiant soldier whose name is synonymous with "war hero" and who is richly deserving of special recognition; and

WHEREAS, born in Atlanta, Georgia, Alexander "Sandy" Bonnyman was raised and educated in East Tennessee, specifically in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, he attended Mrs. J. A. Thackston's School in Knoxville and was graduated from Newman School in Lakewood, New Jersey before entering Princeton University; and

WHEREAS, his father, Alexander Bonnyman, Sr. was President of the Blue Diamond Coal Company of Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, in spite of being thrice exempt from military service during World War II by virtue of his age, being the father of three small children, and his self-employment as a copper miner in a sensitive defense industry, he evidenced his great patriotism by enlisting in the United States Marine Corps in 1942; and

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WHEREAS, his maturity and education were immediately recognized by his superiors, and he was awarded a battlefield commission as a result of his leadership skills and knowledge at Guadalcanal, the first U. S. offensive of World War II; and

WHEREAS, his heroic and valiant actions in the carnage and chaos of the battle for the coral island of Tarawa were credited as being the primary contributing factors in breaching the main enemy command bunker during the third day of the battle; and

WHEREAS, as a result of his exposed position and his fearlessness in the face of enemy fire, Lt. Alexander Bonnyman died at the hands of a determined enemy, but not before successfully carrying a lifesaving day for many of his comrades; and

WHEREAS, the recognition of his heroic fearlessness and exemplary life-preserving efforts resulted in Lt. Bonnyman being awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously; and

WHEREAS, inspired by Lt. Bonnyman's selfless dedication to the preservation of human liberty and the welfare of our fellow citizens, the Knoxville detachment of the Marine Corps League was established and designated as the "Lt. Alexander Bonnyman Detachment, No. 924" in honor of their patron, this heroic officer and gentleman; and

WHEREAS, to this day neither Tennessee, nor his other home states of Georgia and New Mexico, have established an appropriate memorial to Lt. Bonnyman's indelible legacy of courage and patriotism; and

WHEREAS, the Knoxville detachment of the Marine Corps League that is named in his honor has expressed a desire to name a certain bridge spanning the Tennessee River in Knoxville to honor Lt. Bonnyman's ultimate sacrifice of his life so that future generations might enjoy freedom and American democracy; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly most heartily concurs with this outstanding proposal; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Notwithstanding any other provision of law to the contrary, the bridge that spans the Tennessee River on Interstate 140 (Pellissippi Parkway) between Knox and Blount counties is hereby designated as the "Lt. Alexander 'Sandy' Bonnyman Memorial Bridge" in honor of a short, yet bountiful, life dedicated to the defense of his beloved country.

SECTION 2. The Department of Transportation is hereby directed to erect suitable signs or to affix suitable markers designating such bridge as the "Lt. Alexander 'Sandy' Bonnyman Memorial Bridge".

SECTION 3. The erection of such signs shall be within the guidelines prescribed by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

SECTION 4. This act shall become operative only if the Federal Highway Administrator advises the Commissioner of Transportation in writing that the provisions of this act shall not render Tennessee in violation of federal laws and regulations and subject to penalties prescribed therein.

SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.